

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 L-03 PA-01
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HA-05 OPR-02 AID-05 /075 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 5508
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR NIACT IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0397

SAN SALVADOR FOR ASST. SEC. TODMAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, NU
SUBJECT: STRIKE ENTERS FOURTH DAY

REF: (A) MANAGUA 371, (B) MANAGUA 380

BEGIN SUMMARY: STRIKE HAS ENTERED ITS FOURTH DAY WITH NEARLY COMPLETE EFFECTIVENESS AMONG MANAGUA'S PRIVATE ENTERPRISES. SOME STRIKE ORGANIZERS PLAN TO CALL FOR STRIKE TO END ON JANUARY 30 IN WHAT COULD PROVE TO BE SHREWD POLITICAL MOVE. SOMOZA NEWSPAPER HAS TRIED, NOT VERY CONVINCINGLY, TO DEMONSTRATE THAT STRIKE HAS BEEN A FAILURE. ALTHOUGH SOME GON ENTITIES ARE PUTTING PRESSURE ON STRIKERS, THE GUARDIA NACIONAL HAS THUS FAR DEMONSTRATED CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT IN REACING TO THE STRIKE. NO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE HAVE BEEN NOTED YET BUT SOME COULD OCCUR AT ANY TIME IF HOTTER HEADS ON EITHER SIDE OF POLITICAL STRUGGLE DECIDE THAT PEACEFUL MEASURES ARE UNAVAILING. END SUMMARY

1. INFORMAL SURVEY OF CITY TODAY, 1/26, INDICATES THAT GENERAL
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STRIKE OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISES IS NEARLY COMPLETE IN ITS FOURTH DAY. (N.B. STRIKE BEGAN 1/23 AND SNOWBALLED INTO PRESENT GENERAL STRIKE.) FEWER STORES AND GAS STATIONS OPEN TODAY THAN ON WEDNESDAY. EVEN GON SOURCES HAVE ADMITTED THAT STRIKE WAS ABOUT EIGHTY PERCENT EFFECTIVE IN MANAGUA YESTERDAY. EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED NO SPECIFIC DETAILS ON THE STRIKE IN OTHER URBAN CENTERS BUT INDICATIONS ARE THAT ITS EFFECT IS BEING FELT TO SOME DEGREE IN MOST CITIES AND

TOWNS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE HAD SOME UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT A FEW MANAGUA MERCHANTS MAY REOPEN THEIR SHOPS LATER TODAY.

2. SOME OF THE STRIKE'S PROMOTERS TOLD US THAT THEY MAY CALL FOR STRIKE TO END ON MONDAY, 1/30, SO AS TO SPARE GENERAL PUBLIC FURTHER INCONVENIENCE. (COMMENT: THEY PROBABLY CONSIDER IT POLITIC TO MOVE TO END STRIKE UNILATERALLY RATHER THAN WAIT FOR GON TO BREAK IT UP OR --WORSE FROM THEIR VIEWPOINT--FOR IT TO DISINTEGRATE ON ITS OWN. BY CALLING FOR AN END TO THE STRIKE, ITS ORGANIZERS CAN CLAIM THAT THEY, RATHER THAN THE PRO-SOMOZA FORCES, CONTROL EVENTS.)

3. SOMOZA FAMILY NEWSPAPER, NOVEDADES, HAS SOUGHT TO PORTRAY GENERAL STRIKE AS A FAILURE. ON JANUARY 25 THE PAPER CLAIMED, FALSELY, THAT BANKING, BUSINESS AND INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY HAD BEEN NORMAL PREVIOUS DAY. ON JANUARY 26 IT SAID THAT "DESPITE ANONYMOUS PHONE CALLS, THREATS AND COERCION, MERCHANTS AND INDUSTRIALISTS WHO WERE FEARFUL AT FIRST HAVE BEGUN TO REOPEN THEIR DOORS AND TO CONDUCT NORMAL BUSINESS ACTIVITIES. ONCE MORE, THE PEOPLE ARE TURNING THEIR BACKS ON THOSE POWER-HUNGRY CAPITALISTS WHO ARE LINKED TO PARTIES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL WATCHWORD AND WHO WANT TO PROVOKE CHAOS AND BLOODSHED."

4. SOME GON MEASURES TO BREAK THE STRIKE: ON JANUARY 25, THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CUSTOMS ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE STATING THAT THOSE MERCHANTS AND INDUSTRIALISTS WHO DO NOT WITHDRAW THEIR IMPORTED GOOD FROM CUSTOMS WITHIN THE LEGALLY PRESCRIBED PERIOD MAY FIND CONFIDENTIAL

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THOSE GOODS PUT UP FOR AUCTION. THE SAME COMMUNIQUE WARNED THAT CUSTOMS BROKERS WHO DO NOT PRESENT IMPORT DOCUMENTS TO CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES RUN THE RISK OF LOSING THEIR BROKERAGE LICENSES. LABOR MINISTER GARCIA ANNOUNCED JANUARY 25 THAT HE WAS ORDERING A SURVEY OF CLOSED FIRMS TO DETERMINE WHETHER THE MANAGERS OR THE WORKERS WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CLOSURES. HE CITED THE LOCAL NABISCO FACTORY AS AN EXAMPLE OF A MANAGEMENT LOCKOUT OF WORKERS.

5. CENTRAL BANK AND SUPERINTENDENCY OF BANKS ISSUED A "INFORMATIVE" COMMUNIQUE JANUARY 25 STATING THAT BANKING SERVICES ARE OF "PUBLIC INTEREST" UNDER BANKING LAWS AND THAT THE ASSOCIATION OF BANKING INSTITUTIONS OF NICARAGUA HAS THEREFORE NOT DECREED ANY BANK STRIKE. (COMMENT: SOURCES TELL US THAT WHEREAS BANCO DE AMERICA AND BANCO NICRAGUSNSE THE TWO LARGEST NICARAGUAN PRIVATE BANKS, FAVOR JOINING THE STRIKE AT SOME POINT, THE ASSOCIATION AS A WHOLE WILL NOT TAKE A STAND OWING TO THE OBJECTION OF FOREIGN AND SOMOZA-OWNED OR CONTROLLED BANKS. SOME BRANCHES OF BANCO DE AMERICA (NOT BANK OF AMERICA) AND BANCO NICARAGUENSE HAVE CLOSED NONETHELESS.)

6. THERE HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE REPORTED THUS FAR. THE GUARDIA NACIONAL HAS ACTED WITH CONSIDERABLE RESTRAINT. HOWEVER, SOME OPPOSITION ELEMENTS HAVE SPOKEN OF THE NEED

FOR VIOLENCE TO BUDGE THE GON WHILE OTHERS HAVE EXPRESSED FEAR OF
GON-INCITED VIOLENCE.
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